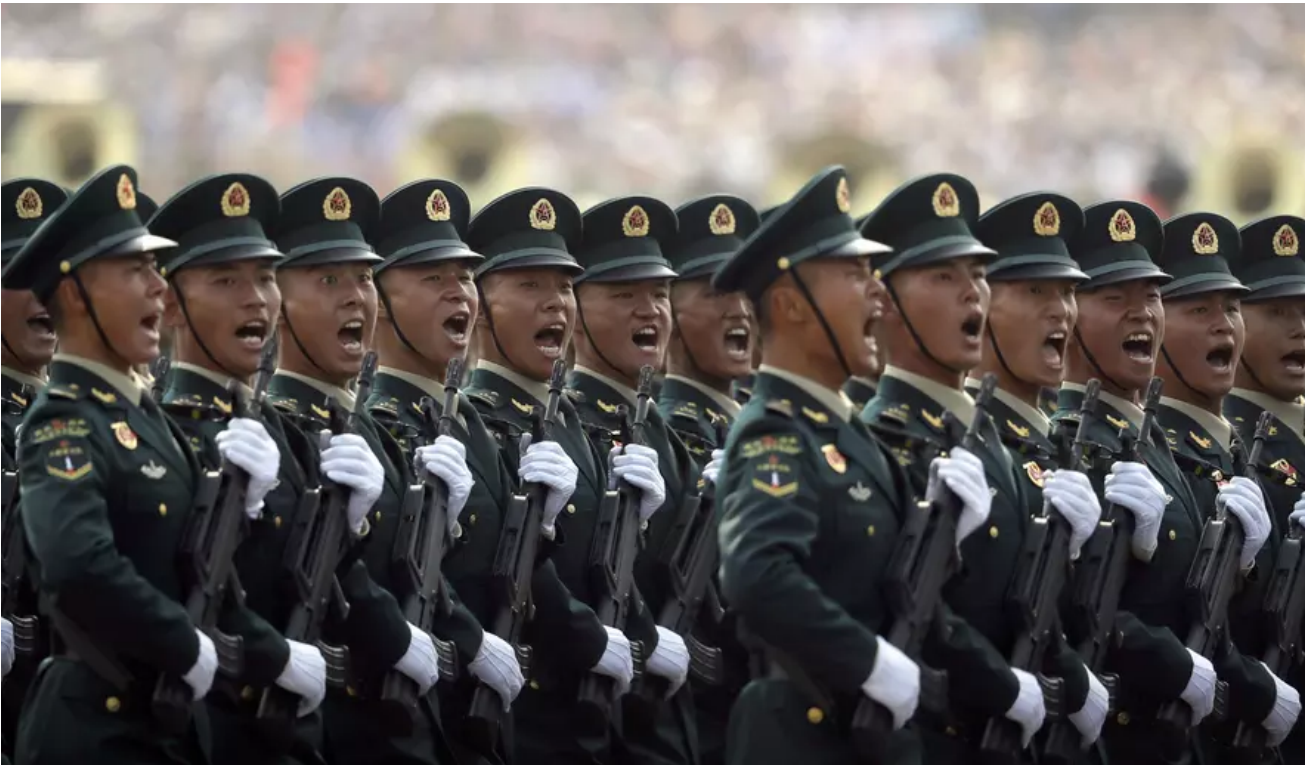


China crafts weapons to alter brain function; report says tech meant to influence government leaders



Members of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) Rocket Force let out a yell as they march in formation during a parade to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the founding of Communist China in Beijing, Tuesday, Oct. 1, 2019. (AP Photo/Mark ... Members of China's People's Liberation Army ... more >

By Bill Gertz

China's People's Liberation Army is developing high-technology weapons designed to disrupt brain functions and influence government leaders or entire populations, according to a report by three open-source intelligence analysts.

The weapons can be used to directly attack or control brains using microwave or other directed energy weapons in handheld guns or larger weapons firing electromagnetic beams, adding that the danger of China's brain warfare weapons prior to or during a conflict is no longer theoretical.

"Unknown to many, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its People's Liberation Army (PLA) have established themselves as world leaders in the development of neurostrike weapons," according to the 12-page report, "Enumerating, Targeting and Collapsing the Chinese Communist Party's Neurostrike Program." The Washington Times obtained a copy of the study.

The U.S. Commerce Department in December 2021 imposed sanctions on China's Academy of Military Medical Sciences and 11 related entities the department said were using "biotechnology processes to support Chinese military end-uses and end-users, to include purported brain-control weaponry."

Few public studies or discussions, however, have been held regarding the new advanced military capability.

Neurostrike is a military term defined as the engineered targeting of the brains of military personnel or civilians using nonkinetic technology. The goal is to impair thinking, reduce situational awareness, inflict long-term neurological damage and cloud normal cognitive functions.

The study was written by Ryan Clarke, a senior fellow at the East Asian Institute of the National University of Singapore; Xiaoxu Sean Lin, a former Army microbiologist now with Feitan College; and L.J. Eads, a former Air

Force intelligence officer and current specialist in artificial intelligence for the U.S. intelligence community. The three authors write that China's leadership "views neurostrike and psychological warfare as a core component of its asymmetric warfare strategy against the United States and its allies in the Indo-Pacific."

According to the report, neurostrike capabilities are part of standard military capabilities and should not be viewed as an unconventional weapon limited to use in extreme circumstances.

Likely areas of use for the weapons included Taiwan, the South China Sea, East China Sea and the disputed Sino-Indian border.

The threat is not limited to the use of microwave weapons: "[China's] new landscape of neurostrike development includes using massively distributed human-computer interfaces to control entire populations as well as a range of weapons designed to cause cognitive damage," the report said.

Research is focused on using brain warfare weapons in the near term, and possibly during a Chinese military assault on Taiwan — a target for future Chinese military operations that U.S. military leaders have said could be carried out in the next four years.

"Any breakthrough in this research would provide unprecedented tools for the CCP to forcibly establish a new world order, which has been [Chinese President] Xi Jinping's lifelong goal," the report said.

Militarily, brain warfare can be used in what the Pentagon has called China's "anti-access, area-denial" military strategy for the Indo-Pacific.

"Imagine (at least partially) immunized PLA troops being inserted into a geography where a specific weaponized bacterial strain has been released prior to their entry to prepare the ground and eliminate points of resistance," the report states. "Any remaining sources of resistance on the ground are then dealt with through [Chinese] neurostrike weaponry that instill intense fear and/or other forms of cognitive incoherence resulting in inaction."

That scenario would allow the PLA to establish absolute control over a nation like Taiwan, while at the same time blunting any American strategic options to intervene and send troops in to support Taiwan. The PLA could thus negate U.S. conventional military superiority with few near-term remedies for the United States, the report said.

“This scenario is based on known existing CCP research programs and what the clear strategic aims of those programs are,” the report said.

The report said placing China’s Academy of Military Medical Science the Commerce Department’s blacklist of companies barred from access to U.S. goods was the result of its leading role in developing brain warfare capabilities. A special branch of the Chinese military known as the Strategic Support Force (SSF) is likely the main unit charged with conducting brain warfare.

The ‘three warfares’ strategy

The SSF is the leader in what the PLA calls a “three warfares” strategy of using nonkinetic weapons in war. The three warfares were disclosed in 2014 by China’s National Defense University and call for employing psychological warfare, media warfare and legal warfare.

Little is known about the SSF but available information indicates the force would be used to shape information environments on the ground and provide the PLA with better battlefield information than its adversaries.

“With additional neurostrike capabilities that can either damage, disorient or even control perceived adversary cognition at the population level, the PLA SSF would represent an exponential escalation in [China’s] aggression in the Indo-Pacific,” the report said.

“Three warfares” operations are underway against Taiwan, Hong Kong, the South China Sea and along the Indian-Chinese border, and the authors warn that the risk of the new brain warfare capabilities being used is increasing.

The SSF “now operates as a type of superstructure on top of a growing and increasingly active platform of Chinese military assets (land, sea, air, cyber, and space) across multiple theaters in the Indo-Pacific while simultaneously serving as the primary deployment platform for new neurostrike weaponry,” the report said.

To counter brain warfare capabilities, the report urges the U.S. military to first expose the threat of neurostrike weapons and call for international talks and policy remedies, such as ethics reviews for neuroscience and cognitive science studies. Proactively, the United States should sabotage critical supply chains of specific institutions or companies engaged in brain warfare research.

Cyber capabilities also should be used to target and disrupt Chinese neurostrike programs. Sanctions against all Chinese civilian and military programs linked to brain warfare also should be increased.

The objective of all counter-brain warfare efforts should be to dissuade China’s leadership from deploying the new technology, the report said.

“Like all of the CCP’s asymmetric warfare programs, neurostrike depends entirely on presenting a massively decentralized and fragmented network structure,” the report said. “This renders it nearly impossible to map using traditional investigative or intelligence approaches.”

China currently does not have the defense-industrial base needed to produce the technologies for a neurostrike program that can match Beijing’s military ambitions, the report said, presenting a window of opportunity for the U.S. and its allies.

“This fundamental gap presents a massive vulnerability for decapitating strikes against the neurostrike program provided that these gaps can be surfaced, and precision-targeted,” the report said.

U.S. and allied nations must locate key weaknesses in the networks involved in the brain warfare program. Covert military action can “make involvement in this weapons program a high-risk venture where technical failure and

negative international attention are the most likely outcomes,” the report said.

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